

October 23, 2020

Saint Paul City Council
City Hall
15 Kellogg Blvd. West
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Members of the Council,

This letter is in support of the appeal of the October 5, 2020 Historic Preservation Commission approval of a three-unit residential structure at 540/542 Portland Avenue in St. Paul. As property owners and an architect with 37 years of experience living approximately 80 feet from the proposed structure, my wife and I have the following concerns:

1. We find it very concerning that this project has been in the works for a year and the neighbors received notice of the HPC Hearing on September 11, 2020, roughly a week before the Hearing. In addition, we have since been told that the HPC has no obligation to notify neighbors in regards to the project. As an architect working in the Twin Cities I have worked on numerous projects around the Twin Cities where we were required to have neighborhood meetings to inform and listen to concerns of building proposals.
2. On October 5th, the BZA Public Hearing and the HPC Public Hearing were scheduled for roughly the same time causing ourselves to choose which hearing to attend. This did not allow us to participate in both of the meetings to state our concerns.
3. We had sent an email to George Gause stating our concerns which was not included in the packet to the Commissioners.
4. The architect of the project held a Saturday informational meeting for the neighbors regarding the project roughly a week before the hearing. To the best of our knowledge none of the suggestions of neighbors or the three neighboring architects has been considered.
5. It should have been noted that all three architects adjacent to project disagree with the HPC's desire to have the front of the proposal structure facing Summit Ave. Since the only access to the property is on Portland, our experience and professional education supports a design that relates to Portland Avenue.
6. Lastly, the applicant (currently the landlord of the current triplex on the site) has not been a good neighbor in keeping up the existing property maintenance – crumbling retaining wall, front yard washouts and snow removal. In our 17 years at our address we have seen no work being done to maintain the existing triplex property.

We hope you will consider the appeal and we hope changes can be made to the proposal so that it becomes a benefit to the neighborhood.

Sincerely
Nick Marcucci, Ann Schroder
552 Portland Ave.

CC: Gar Hargens, Missy Thompson